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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL *page* 131
FRED MARNAU: *Days of Silence* 132
An Afternoon Service for Hugh Kingsmill 133
LORNA BRADE: *Pietà* 133
TESSA M. SILLARS: *What Manner of Man* 134
DAVID WRIGHT: *Five South African Poems* 135
JOHN ATKINS: *Civilization of the English* 138
CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON: *Presences* 139
D. G. BRIDSON: *Curlew* 140
Shearwater 141
Satyr 142
NICHOLAS MOORE: *The Grass and the Flowers and the Sky* 143
MURIEL SPARK: *The Beads* 144
ERIC NIXON: *All Night and Day the Snow had Fallen* 145
EDWARD FIELD: *Mistral* 146
BRENDA CHAMBERLAIN: from *The Green Heart* 147

V. H. FRIEDLAENDER: *Love in Retrospect* page 147
C. BUSBY SMITH: *Conversations With The Moon* 148
Dismissal 154
LOUIS ADEANE: *Quarter* 155
MATTHEW FITZSIMON: *Poem* 156
They Love Who Suffer 156
MARGARET CROSLAND: *Metamorphosis* 157
EDWARD BEHR: *Annihilation* 157
JOHN SINGER: *Naked Prologues* 158
DEREK STANFORD: *Because You Speak of Perversity* 158
GEOFFREY WAGNER: *Lines on Rosa Luxemburg* 159
MURIEL SPARK: *Cecil Day Lewis* 162
REVIEWS 169

After Every Green Thing

A Selection of Poems

by

DANNIE ABSE

The Listener: "Mr. Abse is another poet with imagination and a voice of his own . . . . he writes with real passion, bitterness and a clear sense of form".

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EDITORIAL

LORD Wavell, the distinguished soldier and, doubtless, very charming gentleman, has risen in his wrath in the somewhat dusty precincts of the London Library, that delightful island of Victorian calm in St. James's Square, and done a Munnings on modern poetry. The general does not write poems about horses, but, like so many of us, only collects anthologies in questionable taste. He thinks that modern poetry has all the seven deadly sins old gentlemen have attributed to it since the days of *The Edinburgh Review,* the vitriolic abuse of Swinburne, the storm of protest over the Sitwells in 1923, or the Surrealists in the 'thirties. Not only the Bourbons, it must be supposed, have no taste for history. If Lord Wavell would only find time for his attendance at the London Library to discover for himself the immense diversity of modern poetry, if he would only realize that it is a broad stream, wide as the Thames at Gravesend, that it includes poets who might still be living in the nineteenth century as well as poets who are often flat in their effort to be clear to any kind of intelligence.

Two very important books will have appeared by the time these words are in print. They are the late Ernest de Selincourt's edition of Wordsworth's *Excursion* and *The Last Attachment,* a story of Byron and Teresa Guiccioli by the Marchesa Origo, with 149 of his letters and an account by the Contessa of Byron's life in Italy. Even Lord Wavell will be able to join in the appreciation of these momentous volumes and note the revival of interest in the two poets who were the greatest figures in the English Romantic movement, and who have been under-rated and neglected for much too long.

FRED MARNAU

Days of Silence

For NICHOLAS MOORE

Strangers with shouts and disturbance have forsaken the hills,
now spiders weave their wide cloaks everywhere
and so we also dress in hoods and masks,
with hats which rock like cradles, and we carry
torches and bells, reminders of death,
when we appear before the tyrants.
Muffled hunters came to the house in the afternoon
with their hounds and sat on the ingle-bench,
their eyes still blinded from the fog that hid
the hare and the birds and the gate of the cavern
where the fox in concord dwells with his kindred.
In the iron pot the chestnuts were roasted,
we broke the shells with our teeth and slowly ate,
the foolish peasant-wine threw our heads against the wall.
Still the fog loitered behind the glass and we spoke
of cartridges and belts, we searched for syllables.
Hooded masks, they say, appeared before the tyrants.
We sat and gazed into the fire unmoved and found
no further words to say. Days of silence.

An Afternoon Service for Hugh Kingsmill

So you have caught the everlasting cold,
that last east wind which scatters all our dreams!
I shall not talk with you again till Judgment Day.
Words true and wasted will outlast a lot of sleep,
drowning the untidy heart-throb and the passing pain.
And yet, I wish for one more afternoon of heat,
sitting in club or bar or over Hampstead Heath
as we were wont, lazily gossiping of famous dead
and small-fry quick. Though this time we
could settle some old guesses too, for you
would know now whether Hopkins was John Donne,
what part a re-born Webster plays and who
he might most likely be; thus turning ghost talk
into game. Have we not known in London
those summer afternoons, too slow for poetry, for words
too soft? Even the air will serve as magic food,
no need to kill a bull and taste his blood
to reach across. Give me one word, it will suffice.

LORNA BRADE

Pietà

The man that walks below the lowering cloud
Draws upon himself a shaft of pain,
He who walks the dark diminishing streets
And knows, behind, the sharpened crater's light,
Draws the sap of ecstasy to ground:
Roots beneath the tree to Golgotha.
The tree's third branch is crucified to three
And three last words the common thorn nails down.
Sing, my hate, the flame that shoots its tongue;
Sorrow, sorrow, beat the twisting ash;
Fall below the udder and the calf
And take the roots that cleave the world in three:
God is one, bone of our bone two thieves,
Eternity.

TESSA M. SILLARS

*'What Manner of Man'**

The harsh truth of mirrors will not etch
Its acid-bitten lines
Across persistent memory;
Then we must breathe
An image on the living water
That history will change.

The single face
Of a singled time
Relates the least of undisputed facts;
The eye, turned inwards, re-enacts
Lived-out triumphs in the hollow place;
The partial and impartial mind dispute the acts.
Alone, the sharpened profile lacks
Meaning and motive,
Where these lines touch, they grace
The bland oval which completes
The living face.

Searching reflection among selves already known
By curve of flesh and set of bone,
Startles the odd, intransigent one.
Seek to touch and find inviolate
A contrary-moving stranger
Escaping through the margins to circumference.
Blind motion still attentive for the word
That speaks an end to chaos:
This birth is in abeyance,
The wind has yet to blow the seed
Against outnumbering of chance,
Forcing the issue of the ultimate
Beyond-all-seeking self:
This supplicating image moves
Towards a reconciliation
Of beginnings to their ends.

(* A man beholding his own countenance in a glass. For he beheld himself and went his way, and presently forgot what manner of man he was.')

DAVID WRIGHT

Five South African Poems

I

Each time I return to Johannesburg it is summer,
And clouds hang with black the stage of the sky,
So I perceive the auditors prepared for tragedy,
Ready for lightning, where a harp of thunder

Leans towards Magaliesberg. Does my childhood
Lie before those mountains, where Pretoria
Veils her white facades with jacaranda
Below their shoulders? From Orange Grove

I'd look all the morning at the distance laid between,
The bare areas, undeveloped altitudes,
And plant their furlongs with imagined woods
To be grown in the fields between Magaliesberg and
my home.

Over them stoop and bend the throats of summer
Each time I return to Johannesburg. Over them
I see and hear a portentious requiem
Performed, for each return, by my native weather,

For burial of the closing distances.
The scale grows less. I see the mountains near
My home at each return, dwindle and wither
The imagined woods as death to birth advances.

II

Mr. Ellis, the owner of the Orange Grove
Hotel, in the suburbs of my native city,
Going after Lobengula's buried ivory,
Could never discover its guarded alcove.

Though the aasvogel and the lion's head
He took back, to stuff in the sockets of their eyes
Imitation anger with glass irises,
Might have delighted with novelty the dead

Man sewn in the skin of two oxen. Lobengula,
Whose continent has no memory, a sleeping
Moody appeasable spirit, is keeping
A long silence and two waggons of ivory.

As over the Limpopo and Magaliesberg
To the Fish River, on each Dingaan's Day,
Is a tinkle of drums for the broken assegai,
For the tribes broken in Johannesborg;

Lobengula's body by the river M'lindi
Dries, and by the bones of Mziligazi, Rhodes
Lies royal, Ulodzi, upon the Matoppos,
Romantic emperor and parish Alexander

Keeping his diamond in his cheek; Oom Paul
Rests in Pretoria, the Bible to a thumb
Acquainted with labour, and the premier waggon
Spanning liberty over the Orange or the Vaal;

By the banks of Umgusa, the Orange Grove
Hotel proprietor, on a final safari
Approaches the tribute the last Matabele,
Lobengula, exacted with terror and love.

III

My grandfather was an elegant gentleman
Who trod behind an ox-waggon's wheels in his youth,
Eight hundred miles to Kimberley from Port Elizabeth,
To resuscitate the family fortune.

His love affair with money lasted a long time.
In my childhood I best remember
His glass-panelled car and European chauffeur,
And dignity in a cricket pavilion;

Or when in gardens imitating England
He in a morning coat between two ladies
Walked. I was afraid to recognize
My father's father, and kept my distance.

Nothing became my grandfather so much as his age.
Impoverished and living in a single room,
He kept his grace and distinguished costume,
Imposing on distress an unstooping carriage;

The lady left him, and he took his congé
Like a gentleman. The old colonial
Never allowed a merely personal
Regret pour a poison in the ear of memory.

IV

My favourite myth was the legend of Dr. Livingstone
With linen, salvation, beads and love in his hand,
Searching the continent for Herodotus' fountains,
And leaving after his death his heart and his
guts behind.
The parson who recorded his defeat in dialectics
By an African wizard, going without a whip or a gun
In his hand, to the rivers and the inland lakes,
Among the savage and terrified, came to no harm.

Seeing the Zambesi roll like a leaf below
Him, and the valley of black humankind
Rise like an arm to religion and to their
Peace, the kindly and self-disciplined
Man in the end left their shackles forgotten,
Heard not any more the natural cry
Of the chained river. For more than freedom
He respected the curiosity

That once to glimpse the divided hill
Where the four sources of the Nile shape variously,
Was the last passion, and the final
Burial of his will and energy;
In which prayer dying, David Livingstone
Passed, and those whom he did not save
Carried his bones to Zanzibar and England,
But kept his heart and inwards in their proper grave.

V

In nineteen twenty eight my father's office boy
Died, and his mother followed, weeping,
Black as a widow, the hearse and tripping
Horses to a boneyard dressed with snow.

In Eloff Street an automobile knocked him down.
So he said goodbye to ledgers, it was goodbye
To the Stock Exchange, and adieu eternally
To the firm of O. D. Wright & Son.

Over the crossing angels the pepper trees
Droop, and the cloches of Eternal Flowers
Smudge with dust. The shaking towers
Of white mines muttering where he is

Extract the gold. My father's office boy
Who lies in Johannesburg under the sun
In marble companies, lies in silence shaking down
A quilt of sleep on each man's memory.

JOHN ATKINS

Civilization of the English

Thinking of past times, of the fat women
who ruled my youth, who drowned with flesh my joy,
thinking of muscle's canter, the beat of drums,
the morning air, the touch of clean linen,
I wonder now I was ever no more a boy,
but a lank male, an adult to my thumbs.

I wonder how I grew a second being,
unEnglish now as I was English then,
ready to feel the touch of alien breath
reviving me, pressing a finer seeing
into my eyes, a freak among the men
who laughed as they settled into a cosy death.

The stream flows on: I run upon its banks
and stamp upon the concrete of each dam.
From grass I see the modern moment grow.
Honours are thick with descendants' future thanks,
thanks to the land that held the careless stream,
thanks for the door that did not bar the snow.

CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON

Presences

My spouse is in chambre, hald your pease!

Still, then, winged dreamer in the dark
With thorns upon your tongue, and calm
As the barbed king on death's margin lie.
For him the bird sang out and wove
The blood-embroidered cloth for his burial,
But be with folded hands and wings and speak
In tongues the pricking winds sustain.

Then she sang so small a music
Wound under night streams and rooves
Where love is spent her muffled horn:
Sounds touched the floor of morning,
Fell from the tree her cold shelter—
The drop of sleepy syrup where she drowned him.

But not your tongue which burns
When the night trees spurt out and tell
Their tugging in the dark: so still be
With the thorns about your throat as king,
As the returning bird when they found them
Stiff in their sensible and sleeping gestures:
The double spouse in their chamber at morning.

D. G. BRIDSON

Curlew

Stretching down greenly to the grey village,
Teesdale wears its pattern of wall and farm . . .
        But all's forsaken
Up here where wind strokes over the fine grass
Like fingers ruffling in the fur of a cat . . .
        And above is the bracken.

Lie back in the sunlight . . . That was the call—
Insistence on a Doric pipe—of the lonely curlew . . .
        And wide in the sky
Watch him floating gracefully . . . Like a blind spot
That swims gradually between the printed page
        And the reading eye . . .

Yes . . . And that fantastic hook of a bill nailing him
Spreadeagle to the cloud itself . . . And the long shanks
        Trailing beneath as
Broad span of wing holds him there crucified
Over the bare mountain . . . More solitary
        Than Prometheus . . .

Wait . . . Watch him come drifting down again as the coast
Clears of you . . . And the magnetic bill swings
        Back towards his nest . . .
Then suddenly with a last flurry coming to earth . . .
Jerking uncertainly through the blowing grass
        That brushes his breast . . .

Up once more on your feet. And the wild whistle
Slides upscale after the beating wings
        As once again
He curves away into the blue silence . . .
Leaning there like a farmer upon his gate
        Waiting for rain . . .

Over the brow of the fell, now . . . And the moor moves
Northwards . . . Nor will you see him sinking a second time
Down to those long legs . . .
No . . . Nor tread so dangerously close to the watcher—
Mottled shadow among the grass, his mate—
Mothering blood-warm eggs . . .

Shearwater

No hint of land out here, where the grey sea
Rolls the ship like a windy nest in a tall tree . . .
Only the white-caps and the blowing spume
Riding out from under the ship's thigh,
And the pale sky over all
Empty as a blind man's eye . . .

No . .! Out there to starboard . .! Over the dark
Of the racing water . . . Moving upwind . . .
One up-ended crescent of brown feather,
Sharp as a rusty scythe . . . Cutting a swathe
Of invisible corn . . . To and fro, to and fro . . .
Down the hollow troughs of wave.

What brought you here, bird, out of the West . .?
Or East, South—anywhere that your path lay . .?
Quite silent . . . Quite imperviously
Describing those unending arcs above the water,
Looking for what . .? Pausing for nothing at all . . .
Weaving the intricate patterns of a skater . . .

Was it your mate . .? Lost out here like a ship
Suddenly swallowed up in the sea's maw . .?
Will some feather floating upon the bleak tide
Bring you news of her . .? Saying that here she died . .?
Will that halt you, finish your quest for you . .?
Plunging down into the one grave, to drown at her side . .?

Satyr

Padding down the twilight room,
  Hide that beast beneath its vest!
  Bushy groin and hairy chest,—
Thrust them back into their womb . .!

Face and voice deny the nature
  Surging in the jungle body . . .
  Batten down that savage god: he
Has no part in human creature!

Artifice and patterned living
  Keep that goat-loin in the dark . . .
  Poise of day that sees it stark
Recoils in horror, unbelieving . . .

Over the glinting of the silver,
  Fluttering of the pallid candle,—
  Languid habit hopes to kindle
Kindlier image in the salver . . .

Satin elegance of woman,
  Smiling tiredly in the mirror,
  Sees it suddenly in terror
At her back, the less than human . . .

Knows the baring of the teeth,
  Plunging depth to which all sinks
  Exultantly, as violence drinks
The blood of her and loves the death.

NICHOLAS MOORE

The Grass and the Flowers and the Sky

For PRISCILLA

I read, dear, the notes in your little black note-book,
The notes of pride in yourself at being loved;
Or of hope that you would be loved, and excitement.
My darling, you were young and charming then.

I remember walking through the warm, black night,
Your head bending to mine, and the bench we sat on,
The tall trees round us, and the hidden horses
Making their ghostly movements; and our love,

Aware only of touch, and nearness, the sweetness like honey
Of love, the freshness and newness, until
A policeman loomed through the dark.
It was late. And now I recall

These things, and your wordless, beautiful clinging,
Your pale face, your fond looks. You wrote:—
'The grass and the flowers and the sky on the Gogs.
1940', the least explicit message in your book.

I like you now for that message. I remember
The scabious and vetch, the length of the grasses,
The evening sun, your clothes in disarray,
The bushes, the view, and your half-nakedness.

The long walk home was like a return from the sea,
The cool evening like water around us in our descent,
And we slightly tipsy as after too long a swim.
And of that day I have always you and your beauty.

MURIEL SPARK

The Beads

I never turned wise to the trade of tricks for many
years; and I wandered in merciful delight
the lanes of the sixpenny stores, each counter piled
with the glass beads and the edible beads; I never
considered to count them as now I sit and cast
one and another over and over again.

But always new and brilliant to my brain
their vision bubbled until I saw at last
into the trades of trick, sleight of the clever
salesmen all round me; I was the guiled
consumer of penny beads who tried to incite
a riot in the shop for the last bead lost with the penny.

My empty palm and hollow pocket—
how did I come to discover these?
I only remember there was nothing left to buy,
and shuttered for ever the shop withdrew
under its sheeted counters. For many a year
I mourned the image with wonderful fidelity.

What faith, what love, what ignorant temerity
escorted my indeterminate career
towards a tropical ocean and the new
beads of an oyster pearl-bed? so that I
pondered no more the floor of the seas
but straight down deep I small-boy-dived like a rocket.

Pearls were my talisman; I roped them round
my breast like a starling and wove them over my feet;
over my arms they showered like white-light rain
at the end of a storm; I wore them for fortune's sake
and the sake of my needful heart
and so that no evil should ever approach me.

If a message was sent it did not reach me;
no traveller paused by my side to impart
news of the changing token, or bid me take
one pearl with me to my new fortune, which is this chain
of ivory beads and solemn, separate
penances, across my body bound.

ERIC NIXON

All Night and Day the Snow Had Fallen

All night and day the snow had fallen
sinless to a flawless heaven
uniting hill and house and land
within a purity unbound
edgeless and timeless as a vision.

The burdened trees were still as death
yet richer than autumn in their winter wealth
of milk-white leaves and feathered fruit
a breath of air will bruise
or wantonly for ever lose.

The day had summer's glow
sharp with icicle soft with snow
strange as a woman
fashioned as a whore yet chaste as a nun;
as yet unbroken by the weight of man.

So quiet and white it was,
simple as water, pure as glass
ancient and intricate as moss
wonderful as coral yet cruel as the cross;
it wore a luminosity so infinite
it was more mystical than night.

EDWARD FIELD

Mistral

There was no separation for the land held you;
I saw your return like the boats heavy with fish;
Your presence rose in the vats of fermenting mash;
From balcony and vineyard my love called you.

At the fortress telling of battles with the Moor,
At the market jostling the mediaeval ghosts,
At the quay where the nets hang drying from the masts;
I anticipated hunched shoulders everywhere.

Awaiting your presence from apricot to peach,
The houses tumbled happily on the hill;
The anchovy vats were full of the glittering haul,
And the grapes so ripe they burst at the gentlest touch.

Beneath the sycamore I learned of your sailing,
Lost and unpursuable on the sea;
The boats in the little bay rocked emptily,
And the gulls went dizzy from their crazy wheeling.

A wind descended from the mountain side,
And the piled-up houses turned a dingy grey;
The cypress trees were nearly blown away,
And the grapes were broken from the vine and bled.

The harvest is always bad when the wind tears the grape;
No fishing when the sea is torn to tatters;
The town curled round the hill and closed its shutters:
The season of wind is a time of rest and sleep.

But I stood on a rock that was beaten by waves,
Caught in the wind, torn by the breakers' crash:
No harvest in time of wind of grape nor fish;
No sleep in the season of wind for one who loves.

BRENDA CHAMBERLAIN

from

The Green Heart

O Great Bear in the sky above the freezing earth
The black ship has taken me away too swiftly from my little
sister

Remembering whose voice my memory is cold as the foreign soil
Of this whispering ghostly town where red freighters ride

Breaking the shapes of tall patrician houses hung
Upside down in the muddy water of the canals

The citizens have narrow Byzantine eyes that trouble me
The hopeless diffident gestures of their hands trouble me

Our familiar demons of the waterfall are not here
Nor solitude of the snowy height my little sister inhabits

Birds can fly freely to the icefall where she climbs
Wingless I am trapped by the circumstance of time.

V. H. FRIEDLAENDER

Love in Retrospect

Why do you ask me to your house
When there is no longer a welcome in your heart,
And when your newest acquaintance holds for you
More promise of entertainment than I?

Let us not make traditional gestures
Like figures in some old Chinese play,
Of which the very meaning is forgotten
By one of us.

C. BUSBY SMITH

Conversations With The Moon

For K. CHESTER SHERBURNE

Invocation

The wind's mistress in her ruined splendour;
something of elegance about her; a desolate beauty;
lovely as an image in water adored by swans;
and sometimes, one might think, drunk with dark midnight,
one heard her sing, yet knows this to be fable.

But once she sang, or so it seemed, for the sharp stars
hung still in the gigantic sky; Saturn cried out
at that throbbing sound; Arcturus flamed like a fire;
the earth stopping spinning. But, after all, she fell.
It was a black dawn and the leaves wet with rain.

The dawn unlocked her. Surely the earth shook.
She to a released, emaciated, long-buried Christ
speared in her golden love through the tomb's gap.
The stone lay on its back. She caressed the dead.
Who knows what God in a fever-passion woke?

The deep plains knit their grass-shrouds in the dark.
Seeking some long fled saviour she dominates the sky.
Shadows run from her into the deep wood's harbour.
And as she falls from her height to the ice-bound sea
the nightingale falls silent; the albatross grieves her death.

First Conversation

Eye, beholder of the world's wonder,
tracker of forests' labyrinthine paths; ways
of the salt sea-waves and split rock's crevices,
silent, sardonic in your yellow wisdom,
what secret writhes up now from sleeping Europe
lighting your leprous glance with a treacherous smile?

The wilderness of Europe is the heart's chaos;
a nervous irritation of blood pulses and beats
down the ruined roads strewn with ghosts and rubble.
The dead no easier than the living lie.
Hope on the gallows swings; the knot twists fast.

Whether Rhone or Rhine whatever I shine on bleeds;
the blood like honey drips where my eye distorts;
I see no country dances but somewhere the feet lift
in a field of bones, starvesacre, and the rooks cry out:
Judas, Judas, Judas; and flap in the trees.

Then the scene changes; you move. *The scene does not change.*
But in another time and place? *The same blood flows.*
There is always the cross and the tomb? *Always the cross.*
Christ crucified? *Crucified! the same hate festers,*
hangs in bleak time at an execution hour.

But once, you remember, the lovers on the strange hills;
the deer in the park at twelve and the magic lake
that stole gold secrets from the caroling stars.
Deer, stars and lake; the murmuring lovers lie
still in this time as still in the grave time's grave.

Lust on the casual hills lies; folly, grief;
all, all bleed in the cruel dark stabbed in the back;
they totter on the edge of a shallow welcoming grave
where death is insecure, where still the nightmare crowds
from the ruined plains of Europe; shattered; dark.

I hear the languages like a crazed mind grope
into a splintered history crushed like a skull,
back, back and back to find some meaning, but lost
all lost too soon and frantic like bats in the sun.
Nor can they cry out; even their pain is dumb.

No golden urns for the dead for the ease of their bones.
No shelter or hope for the pale somnabulists
walking long avenues down their dim twilit world.
The map spreads out like a raw, dissected heart;
exposed to the withering air the blue nerves twitch.

Laughter springs up from the trees; a Kundry-mirth;
the tottering cities like Amfortas lie.
The rats are out in the alleys; a black blight forms
like midnight on the dazed and muttering hills.
At each man's heart a maggot-murder gnaws.

Pause

Shoal-water; storm-weather; symbols of fear and danger
limbed for an unquiet time in uneasy minds.
Tides rising and falling; cries of the torn drowned lapping
under smothering weed or onto the ribbed, wet sand.

Moonlight on hands or hearts wherever turning;
the green woods burning with a silver grief;
patterns and sounds of wounds in a time of weeping
no quivering eye may scatter or ear dispel.

Second Conversation

As in a violent summer the storm breaks, or in remote
regions
in river-mouths the pack-ice screams and cracks
at the end of an iron season; as the falling pine
hangs motionless in the gathered air at the last strike
of the jaunty axe then leaps to a splintering doom,
she at a pace, exulting, like a hunter raced
out of the cloud-brake; a merciless, sharp vision
furious in a tempest of red stars showered on the wind.

Hunter of souls, betrayer of mysteries,
uncover no more! our anguish bleeds in the fields
furrowed by war and murder and black with hate.
Let the seas cease, pull no more, let the slow tides lull,
let the ruined islands hide in their fevered dark.

The tide must turn, heart stir, and the sleeping eye
open in time from its dream of death though the pain
flare through the skull and the weak flesh flame on the bone.
Though songs and prayers resound in the bitter sky
no easy exit gapes; shines no way out

Save through that way of personal sacrifice; gall
more sweet and nourishing is than the sour-balm salve,
the suffering pain for pain, for the wounds of man.
The heart aches and will break in the desolate years;
tearing at tares in the wheat wild hands will stain the fields

With poppy-heads of blood and the beaded sweat
will water the arid earth where the treacherous flints
strike up like snake-fangs into the naked flesh.
These are the days of reaping, the time when Time
runs up like a shadow to snare you in a choking shroud.

And the harvesters shall be the harvested and all
the flaming heart of autumn be a pyre
lit for your sins and sorrows. Oh lunatic now
I see the world turn floundering in her seas
and through her pain the son of man drawn down.

Oh but we'll run back then to the sun, to the light, and shed
all fret and folly on hillsides gangrened by moon
and cry to the mercy of the free air and the glittering angels
of the day of forgiveness domed in a worshipping heaven
and drag the slipping world back out of her doom.

We'll grave the ruins with mottoes of light and the heart
shall find new room for singing and the eye awake
to an emerald landscape, a green spring sprung from winter
and voices too long locked in their tomb of sighs
shall carol bright anthems of hope in the blossoming air.

Fall then and fall, Cassandra-moon, to the sea;
lie buried like ships and gold cold fathoms down.
And when I again rise spearing the sun from the sky,
with silver truth setting the night sky ringing . . . ?
Why then we'll call you false and let you die.

Pause

Lie open now to the moon, to the pricking stars
the wounded mind and the heart; a forest of thought
lies bared, and along some twisted tortuous path
the wanderer, dazed, reels lost in his maze of grief.

Or in a glade made mad by the glancing yellowly
mocking of the moon his fever returns again.
The pain of the world, the ruin of Europe seeps
into his stricken heart, his bottomless well of tears.

He sees in a pool of starlight the agony grope;
his mind by moonlight frayed pursues the griefs
of a numb, bewildered time, all time turned back.
Under red leaves he sees young limbs lie torn.

No single primal curse but the endless folly
pursued by man he sees Time in, Time out;
and in a million dazzling Edens fall
a million Adams drowned in darkness.

Third Conversation

The night furious and the wild winds flying.
Smouldering among vicious sparks of stars she rides
burning the lips of clouds with a livid kiss.

Trees may not hold her. Their leaping herring-shoals
of silver fish-leaves twitch in the net of the night.
The white knives of her light ring on the spidery roads
that twist across this landscape pitted with graves.

Orion she intimidates with a sardonic smile;
the sky's south hides in shadow; she to her north
bitter and cold as ice hies in a veil of rain.

Do not look down lest you should see us weep.
Turn away, turn away soon, let the thick clouds cover
your bright and penetrating and disastrous beauty.
Too tired to be mocked now, broken, we stagger, grope
in such a dazed, wild, piteous procession

Oh to illumine our wanderings would be too much pain.
Our false heroics falter; our hearts in the deep night bleed
though no blood runs, but blindly gazing we know
the rain bite through to the bone, the eyes turn black
hollow and vague as death, and the weak hands fall

Letting even our best loved childish trinkets slip
into a strange past past all recognition
where, as in a distorting mirror, our grey shapes glide
in their own distress, twisted and wanly laughing.
Turn back gold Goddess into your bitter sea.

If it were a star radiant on the dropped son saviour
of the twisting world and another virgin sleeping;
if it were the sound of the trumpet summoning the dead
or the day of the second coming, the miraculous fulfilment
of an unbelieved promise by a furious long-dead Christ

Driving through clouds, a savage harvester come
at the climax of staggering time, what song would ring
to my lamp and my pitying smile? Oh children, children
of a world by yourselves forgotten only, black
because in a riot you put out those fair lights

That shone in the trees' hair once and burned in your eyes,
I, in my sacred movements, in the heaven of my sky
scorn all your lamentations nor once glance down
with a tithe of sorrow for all your dark grief and pain,
but turn up bones and skulls in the light of my smile

Never to remind you of anything save dark death
mirroring thoughts, like dead weeds, in your mind.
I turn with an ochre finger the shuttered gate of the grave
and in the desolate tombs explore and mock
all life and living, lighting up death's dominion.

And this while summer sweats across the fields,
a humid, relentless heat, while the black rain falls.
And in the shadows, muttering, of the gabled house,
like angels' wings I see your dove-white hands
raised in pathetic prayer to the heedless sky.

Oh then we'll grave the night with an oath, with a hymn;
unlock our clasped hands though our hearts be locked
still in the same prayer, wordless, to the wide sky ringing;
no more will we turn bewildered under your eye
but run on the wind to the morning's edge and the sun.

We'll build from the bones of the dead bright heaven-
havens
of laughing cities in the warmth of the fostering day
with birds and sounds of water our gay songs mingling;
bring love at last from the fled years and the dark
floods of our towering grief, and the ebbed tide will show

Silver on a new shore miraculous patterns of glory
from our humility torn like a rib, and fashioned
into a new hope under the sun's sweet eye;
take all our fears, our deaths, to a communal grave;
restore with surgeon's hands grey Europe's ruin

And build a little city under a hill,
city of a sane world under a sheltering hand.
Oh fall to your morning death without mourning moon
where weeds rock ever nightward along dark waves
and shells down tunnels of sand scoop deep from the light.

Bright mistress of the wind in your wind-whirled palaces
lit by the sharp, the enigmatic stars;
we cast you devil-wise out in the face of the morning
and conjure green and golden a glittering landscape
bursting with joy in the heart of the trumpeting sun.

Dismissal

Deeper than death; darker than agonies;
now where no wind walks she lies weeping.

Lost in her haunted beauty she hears the owl
call once to the luminous sky from the prickling wood.

Silence comes down that is a sign of waking;
then bud and bird-song breaking the dew-webbed air.

Her courtier stars all fled, like a tyrant queen
she reigns all desolate in her ruined temple

And mourns in the empty galleries of chill air;
nor can she cry or sing, by love forsaken.

The murmuring hours drop down till, one by one,
like autumn leaves in the twilight they lie gathered.

Then like an ancient legend in the darkening air
the palace startled with music, poetry, hangs

Like a glass bell around her where in a throng
of glittering starlight back all her courtiers come.

LOUIS ADEANE

Quarter

At any crossroad truth may hang.
Boxed in a swinging cage of bone
Eight winds in congregation sing
The child is compass to the man.

The world encompasses the man.
Altered in air with angel tongue
The child has breath within the bone
To sing for hymn his suffering.

Long suffering is child within
The man who turns about the world.
At cross of compass all are one:
The man must meet the murdered child.

At any crossroad meet the man,
The dying god, the haltered child;
The one who murdered breath within
Whispers for quarter of the world.

MATTHEW FITZSIMON

Poem

I see her as a child in wonder rising
To view me broken in a shifting storm,
And hails me to be by her unending calm,
And hides no innocence, and speaks no harm.

How late is my arrival now to hear no voice,
To see her move away when I would ask,
That I have come to seek the heart that brought me here
And see her virgin face without the mask.

They Love Who Suffer

There is love because there is grief,
There is grief because there is pain.
Who cries, deceived, who speaks of tears,
And crying not makes ruin for their joy.

Gone beyond a thorn,
I saw him in a cloud,
My shaping fancy grew,
I heard him sing aloud.

Ascending as in grief
With winds sad as this heart,
Unseen undying things
Ever remain apart.

He plucks a rose who is prince of pain,
With the burning crown upon his head,
He dies in light and the sun is screened,
And the night is not still with the moving homeless
lonely.

MARGARET CROSLAND

Metamorphosis

The kingfisher—diving thought of him
streaks on the pool—O blue and green
show strength of his wing, spinning water
or sway of iris and torn leaf.

The one-for-sorrow magpie flight,
his wounded hyacinth-eye can stay
a dry season's lateness or round the bracken
curling brownly to his hand.

Now he is the tall heron solemn
and watching on the shore, where grey
rattles the sea-holly, waiting
the tide and turning limit of his love.

EDWARD BEHR

Annihilation

Do not think I know why I cry wolf across the waters
where no-one will hear above the city's death-rattle
my life pour out in sawdust seams,
and spare me charity as false as a Charity Ball.
There will be no silver collection, as on the last occasion
for I am father of few thoughts, and only one original.
Stay this last moment, my friends, my strangers.
Martyrs best perform in public. What, am I so sane
that you can afford not to smile?
One of you fetch a policeman—but stay:
I must reconstruct the crime,
say a few words to the bereaved mother
and be Best Man at a Submarine wedding
all before he comes. You think me mad?
Hybrid I've let my fancies dwell too long
Underwater. They are drunk with tunnelling.
Let millions hear me, and remember,
all's not lost if I my self dismember, before your eyes.

JOHN SINGER

Naked Prologues

The naked country and the stars dead eyes,
Empty of lechery, and the terror, the terror
Of the final lie in human love.

Old fields like bags of bones, old loves, croak,
quack, grunt.
All the old, stale miracles of renewal.
The clockwork febrile fetishes of renewal.

Prologue of want and epilogue of hunger,
Prologue of cruelty, epilogue of gall,
The final unclenched fist, releasing all.

Oh, beyond the semblance of virtue and the semblance
of sinning,
I could fall into sleep like a tired child,
To drown in my beginning.

DEREK STANFORD

Because You Speak of Perversity

(after the French of Guillaume Apollinaire)

In yesterday's letter you wrote to me, speaking of vice;
But what part has vice in the sum of tumultous emotion?
What part has the single sand-grain, absorbed by the sea,
irredeemably lost in the blue-green gulfs of the ocean?

Yes, ours the inflaming power of imagination;
And—should we desire it—ours the dance of fire,
Where the senses leap and prance to the point of
exhaustion,
While the world fades out; and our limbs lie stretched
in the mire.

Twin bodies basking in each other's fervour,
All fear locked out in an intense embrace;
And when this ruined world in panic chatters
The night, for us, shines like the morning's face.

What does it matter, if mouth agape and breathless,
Like a couple of field-guns fallen from their carriage,
Our flesh—tired out with too much love—lies silent!
Such passion rests but to renew its marriage . . .

O heart, be proud; trust only imagination.
Humanity cringes, frightened by a word.
Vice, in the end, is a bogey, a name, an illusion,
Deceiving none except the vulgar herd.

GEOFFREY WAGNER

Lines on Rosa Luxemburg

on the Anniversary of Her Death

What heavens what altars
what enraged stars what
great fire burns for her
now where she sits
a cloud of mist
in the valley

She whom we knew our
shallow ship slipped through
that gulf of days we
finger here and feel
those idle toys her
plaintive failing hours

Summer sho knew her
played positions with
her unending seasons
now a few feet of clay

She knew our mercy
who was most merciful
she knew our love
who was most lovely
she knows
secret remunerations
in the dust

For her rhymes were lovely
and blessed are the angels
who grant her all gifts
for her rhymes were lovely
and she wandered in the world
a long while

Now she lies buried here
who was most just
and sleep who loads her lids
is black behind her eyes
whilst in each desolate city
wastes the breath from
her white lips

What heavens what altars
when Bavaria called her
Berlin knew her
Ernst Hans Kurt
spelt out those days
which drowned her dreams
in lead
she was the noblest of them all

What heavens what works of man
what bloody vows

The guns silenced her visions
where now the warrior
wakes on the hill
when evening introduced her sorrows
she suffered for our sake
she was shot in the back

Nor sought the shade
what time we played with sticks
she the tormented traveller
came to danger and
an iron world
they shattered her hours
in the blood of our babies

What heavens what ways
devoured her ecstasies what
hopes what human love

Now her bones whisper
threadbare music
to our muscled tense
coins close her eyes
in the silent
sockets of the skull
hisses the worm
the careful cold
begins to creep
between the marrow and the skin
dividing life from death
heart from head
political anger from great thought
dividing citizen from man
dividing the marrow from the bone

Sick hearts sore sides we
waited there and watched
beyond the hill where the city
tolled like a bell
where the worm rose
from the sweet earth the white
white bones lay in
the cold earth their couch
in the steel stone their pillow

What heavens what altars
O what undying fires

CECIL DAY LEWIS

THE most recent volume of poems by Cecil Day Lewis—*Poems 1943-1947*—was greeted by critics with some uneasiness, by no means arising from a common cause. 'Surely,' was the cry of some, 'these garden plots, these willows and heartsease, have not sprung from the turf we ploughed and the oats we sowed in the communal farms of nineteen-thirty.'

'Ah,' declared others, 'you see what happens. You brought your tractors and horse-power motors across the graves of the ancient dead, but in the end the Hardy annuals conquer the Unseen, Unguarded Dust.'

Unlike some of his contemporaries, Cecil Day Lewis did not make any specific declaration of a change of attitude, but entered upon new phases without apology, or any recognition of an obligation to publicly confess; he did not seem to consider it a duty to post a bulletin outside his gates with every fluctuation of the poetic heart. Indeed, he made it clear at the outset that no such ceremony was to be expected when, introducing Part II of *Transitional Poem* he quoted Whitman:

> *Do I contradict myself?*
> *Very well then, I contradict myself;*
> *I am large, I contain multitudes.*

This was more prophetic than possibly Mr. Day Lewis realized at the time, when, in accordance with the 'come clean' code of his generation, he was stating his case-history in the objective language of:

> *Now I have come to reason*
> *And cast my schoolboy clout,*
> *Disorder I see is without,*
> *And the mind must sweat a poison*
> *A pus that, discharged not thence*
> *Keener than Thessaly's brew;*
> *Gangrenes the vital sense*
> *And makes disorder true.*
> *It is certain we shall attain*
> *No life till we stamp on all*
> *Life the tetragonal*
> *Pure symmetry of brain.*

As recently as 1947, Cecil Day Lewis opened his series of published Clark Lectures, *The Poetic Image* with the declaration in detailed terms, of the poet's tendency to contradict himself, his inability, almost, to do otherwise:

> *'He writes a poem; then he moves along to the new experience, the next poem: and when a critic comes along and tells him what is right or wrong with that first poem, he has a feeling of irrelevance. Did I write that? Yes, so I did . . '*

Paradox would seem to be the (paradoxically) constant attendant of Cecil Day Lewis as a poet. 'No poem ever contradicts another poem, any more than one experience can be contradicted by another', he writes; and this is an effectual answer to those who might wonder why the poet of:

> *Farewell again to this adolescent moon;*
> *I say it is a bottle*
> *For papless poets to feed their fancy on.*

did not expressly denounce his earlier faith when he became the poet of:

> *The moon slides through a whey of cloud; the running*
> *Cloud thins over the moon, and again curdles.*
> *Milk of the word, flow!*
> *Shine forth, my shadowed clay!*
>
> (*New Year's Eve*).

When the poem was written, from which the first extract is quoted, the poetic experience was no less valid than that which inspired the second poem; but at the time of the first poem's appearance there had been altogether too much moon; the poets of the 'twenties and 'thirties felt it necessary to renounce the creamy romanticism of their immediate forbears, curdled as it was by the acidity of the times.

This brings one to the realization that the peculiar stringencies of their ethos marked out the poets of the 'thirties as freaks of tradition, for whilst it is normal for the poets of a particular age to react more or less urgently against the art and principles of the times immediately preceding their own, the poets of the 'thirties, placed in an environment of great social upheavals, were exceptionally repelled by the past. Normally, the poet will approach his work from the subjective viewpoint before he becomes

objective; and he will express external stimuli in terms of his inner consciousness before he does the reverse. For the poets of the 'thirties, this was impossible due to the extraordinary pressure of social circumstance.

To the reader to-day, much of what the poets wrote then may seem extraneous to poetry; but we are not, perhaps, far enough separated from the events which motivated the poetry of the 'thirties to fully appreciate how the rifts which were occurring in the substance of tradition created the very conditions whereby these poets came to renounce tradition.

It would have been no more possible for Cecil Day Lewis to have written *New Year's Eve* in the early 'thirties, than it would be relevant for him to say, now:

> *Farewell again to this adolescent moon;*
> *I say it is a bottle*
> *For papless poets to feed their fancy on.*

although, in the normal course of poetic development, the latter poem might have been written first. And equally, his more recent poems, *The Misfit, The Christmas Tree,* and his magnificent poem in celebration of Emily Brontë, would have taken quite a different form, had they been composed in the days when a Utopian future seemed the natural consequence of prompt action and plain speaking; in the days, for instance, when Cecil Day Lewis's version of the latter was:

> *It is now or never, the hour of the knife,*
> *The break with the past, the major operation.*

Although the attitudes of Mr. Day Lewis and his contemporaries implied the conviction that mankind is in a position to accept, reject or generally control the effects of the past, these poets were themselves conscious protagonists in a drama of circumstances over which they had no control. In the sense that the normal order of their poetic development was reversed, they were victims of a compulsory distortion of their functions; and it was a distortion which left some of the most promising poets of the time permanently disabled, and the survivors curiously susceptible to the results of frustration. The poets with whom Cecil Day Lewis's name was linked—W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender and Louis MacNeice—have each shown the effects of the unnatural climate of their youth in a different way; W. H. Auden

by tenatiously persisting as a Reflector of his Age; Stephen Spender by making a point of renouncing his past creed (to which he was never an entirely faithful apostle) and, with a sense of absolution, proceeding to develop his fine poetic sensibility along much the same lines as those on which he worked in his earlier verse; Louis MacNeice by trying everything once. Cecil Day Lewis, however, owes himself the largest compensation of them all, for he is more naturally a poet of the *inner mood* (as distinct from the *personal aspects* of experience which mark Spender's verse) than any of his three contemporaries mentioned above; and it is because his pure responses to people, places and things were thwarted by the sociological demands upon his early work, that he indulges these responses now with what would otherwise seem unaccountable unevenness. The compensatory impulse has produced not only the result of such mature reflection as:

Said Heart to Mind at the close of day,
I was older than you, yet I led you astray
Fancying I knew each twist and turn of the way,
Said Heart to Mind.
The blind would still have been leading the blind
Whichever of us had held the sway,
Answered the pensive Mind.

and such acute insight as produced, from his poem *Emily Bronte*:

All is the same still. Earth and heaven locked in
A wrestling dream the seasons cannot break:
Shrill the wind tormenting my obdurate thorn trees,
Moss-rose and stone-chat silent in its wake.
Time has not altered here the rhythms I was rocked in,
Creation's throb and ache.

but is also responsible for the gauche *Lines for Edmund Blunden* which begin:

Your fiftieth birthday. What shall we give you?
An illuminated address
Would be hard on one who was never at home with
Pomp or pretentiousness.

and which, one can only imagine, was composed with the no-doubt laudable object of pleasing Mr. Blunden.

Mr. Francis Scarfe suggested, some time before the appearance of Mr. Day Lewis's latest volume, that the latter's translation of *The Georgics* would more fully prepare him to develop as a nar-

rative poet; and whilst Cecil Day Lewis's most recent work cannot be said to show a leaning toward the narrative form, it may well be than his future poetry will fulfil Mr. Scarfe's prophecy. One cannot think, however, that Virgil's classic, sympathetically as it is handled by Mr. Day Lewis, will bear an influence on the style or forms of his poetry in the future, for it is not in the panoramic vista that Mr. Day Lewis will find his most effective stimulus. The translation of *The Georgics,* apart from its being a justifiable end in itself, can be regarded as an act of homage to the past, another manifestation of the denial to the early Cecil Day Lewis, of his natural talent for pure and particularized lyricism.

To dwell upon the hypothesis that, had Cecil Day Lewis occupied himself less with objective expression in his earlier work, he would have progressed to a greater profundity in his later output, would be vain; it can be said only that had such been the case, his poetry to-day and in the future would be different. Accepting the assumption, however, that certain values attach to the assessment of all poetry, it must be recognized that his earlier poetry has a value to literature quite apart from considerations of its social background.

Cecil Day Lewis's first element is lyricism; not merely a matter of poetic forms and rhythms, but in the sense also of imagistic and verbal patterns. The importance as poetry of his early work lies in the poet's original use of contemporary images, managed with a deftness that showed the more convincingly, how they can be used in poetry without incongruity. No-one of his generation showed this quite so well as Cecil Day Lewis; others were more audacious, crisp, forceful, but none demonstrated so clearly as he, that urban, technical, and scientific language has a place in poetry. His method was subtle: scarcely a poem of his, on a subject however unsuited to preconceived ideas of the poetic, but contains at least one stanza of 'pure' poetry, as when he begins a poem (from the sequence *Feathers to Iron*) with

> *Let's leave this town. Mutters of loom*
> *Nor winding gear disturb*
> *The flat and residential air—*
> *A city all suburb.*

and ends it with:

> *You are the tides running for ever*
> *Along this ancient grove:*

Such winds am I, pause not for breath
And to fresh shores will move.

and again, in a poem from *The Magnetic Mountain* sequence, the stanza:

Who raised his hands to brand a Cain
And bless a submarine—
Time is up: the medicine man
Must take his medicine.

gains significance when it is followed by:

The winter evening holds her peace
And makes a crystal pause;
Frozen are all the streams of light,
Silent about their source.

This method might seem simply a way of serving two masters, yet the effect is such as to integrate rather than unhinge the individual poems. Possibly one of the reasons why some of Mr. Day Lewis's readers find his poem-sequences difficult to justify intellectually, as sequences, is that sometimes whole poems in the 'pure' lyrical style, intersperse the 'theme' lyrics. That is not to say that these apparently unconnected lyrics are not, in fact, connected with the main subject of their particular sequence, for they provide a more flexible means of identifying the variations of meaning within the allegory of each sequence.

Thus, the slick, bitter lines from *The Magnetic Mountain*:

I'm a dreamer, so are you.
See the pink sierras call,
The ever-ever land of dew,
Magic basements, fairy coal.
There the youngest sons win through,
Wee Willy can thrash the bully,
Living's cheap and dreams come true.

become illuminated more powerfully when the poem in which they appear is followed by:

Tempt me no more; for I
Have known the lightning's hour,
The poet's inward pride,
The certainty of power.

One can well understand the enthusiasm from more responsible quarters, that met the poetry of the 'thirties; swept along by the forward movement of its revolutionary ideology, the verse of this period had a heady freshness about it. To read for the first time Cecil Day Lewis's poem beginning:

> *Look west, Wystan, lone flyer, birdman my bully boy!*
> *Plague of locusts, creeping barrage, has left earth bare:*
> *Suckling and centenarian are up in air,*
> *No wing-room for Wystan, no joke for kestrel joy.*

must always, at any point in time, be an exhilarating experience.

From *Poems 1943-1947* it would be difficult to guess what direction Mr. Day Lewis will take in the future. Part of the disappointment some critics feel in his work, arises from a sense that he does not appear to be going anywhere. If this is so, it can be said that the temporary pause, in which he takes stock of his situation, as indicated by the autobiographical pieces in this book, has enhanced his powers of perception and has sharpened his receptivity to the rare image.

Perhaps 'direction' is too rigid a term to apply to the best that is to come from Cecil Day Lewis, implying too great a limitation on his scope. Indeed, the conception that poets must move in some 'direction', has placed on them, in the recent past, an unreasonable obligation with a consequent inhibiting effect. As far as Cecil Day Lewis is concerned, his finest work may well arise from the haphazard moment, the singular occasion and from experiences which move in divergent directions.

MURIEL SPARK.

LILIAN BOWES LYON

An Appreciation by Hermann Peschmann

It was with deep regret that one learned of the death of Lilian Bowes Lyon at the end of last July. The busy world of society knew her—as far as it knew at all of the existence of so quiet, so retiring, so interior a creature—as the daughter of the late the Hon. Francis Bowes Lyon and as a niece of the 14th Earl of Strathmore and, consequently, a cousin of the Queen. But to the world of letters she was a poet of rare perceptivity of vision, deep spiritual awareness, and a carefully controlled mastery of language and technique.

Born in 1895, she grew up devoted to the Northumbrian countryside; to those bare Northumbrian hills that have left their mark on her poetry in choice of subject, emotional discipline, and choice of imagery, and among which she now lies buried. It was a countryside that gave her her roots and her unflinching sense of values. I only came to know her during the last two years, but rapidly discovered beneath her gentle, humble, and tentative exterior a deep certitude about those values and their order that argument or persuasion left undisturbed. She loved that early life on a farm and understood it so well—as a poem like *Northumbrian Farm* shows—and her love for the farm animals, especially the horses, is a recurrent note in her verse. One of my memories of our last meeting was of listening to her reminiscences of 'Duchess' and 'Violet' and other four-legged favourites of her Wiltshire and West Country farming days later in life.

She once wrote to me that she had 'lived and worked in many 'worlds' . . . owing my greatest debt to several busy years in the blitzed East End'. The fruit of that experience is in her *Evening in Stepney* volume. When last year, in connection with the Notes to an anthology of contemporary verse I am editing and in which she is to appear, I was asking for personal details of her life, she insisted that I should minimize her fine work in that area. 'I went there because I wanted to,' she insisted. 'I had always wanted to know how the other world lived—so I went to find out . . .' by taking a little self-contained flat in Bow and genuinely living the life of the East End. And there, in the aftermath of the blitz, and again when the fly-bombs came, she was a veritable fount of consolation to all who knew her; especially in getting those little, kindly acts done for the old and the sick

among the bombed-out: acts for which officialdom makes no provision. I wish I could convey the sense of adventure with which she told me, with such modesty but such clearly abiding joy, of her numerous excursions, in those fly-bomb days, in the cart of a coster who had befriended her. For, in the meantime, she had developed a form of diabetes. Complications ensued, including arthritis and arterial sclerosis, that rendered her at first partially a cripple and latterly wholly one; that attacked first one leg, then both, leading finally to their amputation; and that more recently spread to her hands, and was ultimately responsible for her death.

For many years she was in almost constant pain, but it did nothing to dim her courage or to ruffle, except momentarily, the ordered calm and inner peace of her life. If she had one 'grievance' it was more a sorrow than a complaint: it concerned the lack of understanding by many critics, here and in America, of her work. There were, of course, exceptions: the *Times Literary Supplement* spoke with admirable discernment of her *Collected Poems,* and I tried to convey something of their range and achievement.* And her fellow poets—to instance only two, Day Lewis, who so understandingly introduced that 'Collected' volume, and Edith Sitwell—knew and appreciated her work. And for her part she knew something valuable had been accomplished, though she would often insist she was 'still learning to be a poet'; still learning to articulate facets of human joy, and more particularly of human suffering of which she had experienced so full a measure; and of the reconciliation of the two in a world beyond time and human circumstance. Her voice in her books was a quiet one, out of tune with all that was raucous, blatant and egotistical in contemporary existence—and, one must add, very often in contemporary verse. But, however slowly, it will make itself heard—and felt. As I said when reviewing her work,

> * Sincerity and strength within the self-imposed limits of her range; a disciplined control of image and cadence, and a deep sensitivity to spiritual values: these are the essence of her work. She writes with her whole personality, and this integration of a rich, complex, and at times almost mystical experience, in verse of a controlled verbal and technical felicity, entitles her to a high and enduring place among contemporary English poets.

I would make no extravagant or hyperbolical claims, compara-

*In "The Wind and the Rain", Volume V. No. 2. Autumn 1948.

tively or absolutely, for it; and she would not have wished me to. Her life, both in physical suffering and in the way of poetry, had been what, for quite other reasons, she entitled her last separate verse book: *A Rough Walk Home.* But posterity will gradually recognize her arrival there. May I venture to repeat what I said at the end of my article only last autumn—but how long ago it now seems!

Some covet life to lose it; some agree
With Christ at last, like dew the sun draws up,

she said of her *Blind Tramp*; of that small company is Lilian Bowes Lyon.

HERMANN PESCHMANN.

ON BEHALF OF EROS

Of those works deriving from the erotic impulse, in all its purity and unperverted strength, the annals of nineteenth century letters can offer us no richer examples than the writings of Patmore and Kierkegaard.*

Both of these authors, in their own distinct manner, affirmed the primacy of love: the first as the content of conjugal passion (typifying, here on earth, the nuptials of the spirit with God); the second as the highest mode of human-divine communion ('the delight of renunciation is simply a lover's understanding with God. . . . Renunciation is a higher relation to God, it is really a love-relationship').

Situate in a romantic century (as far as fashions of feeling are concerned), and bearing upon them and in their work so many romantic characteristics—excitement of thought, *afflatus* of style, the ceiling and ground-level of rejoicing and despair—the opinions of these writers, so often opposed, repudiate in fiery isolation the ideologies of their day. Both, for instance, attack romantic love with its doctrine of the one predestined partner; and substitute a concept of conjugal affection, in which the presiding deity is not the element of rare lucky chance but rather a discipline of tender adaption.

*"The Poems of Coventry Patmore" (Oxford University Press 8s. 6d.)
"Kierkegaard: the Analysis of the Psychological Personality" by Rudolph Friedman (Peter Neville Ltd. 3s. 6d.)

'Romantic love,' writes Kierkegaard, in words that finely substantiate Patmore's narrative poem *The Victories of Love,* 'remains constantly abstract in itself, and if it is able to acquire no external history, death already is lying in wait for it, because its history is illusory. Conjugal love begins with possession and acquires inward history.'

Read as a psychological whole, as the work of a central conditioning instinct, the poetry of Patmore is seen in its full span as an ardent intellectual exegesis of love.

'The whole of after-life', writes Patmore, 'depends very much upon how life's transient transfiguration in youth by love is subsequently regarded; and the greatest of all the functions of the poet is to aid in his readers the fulfilment of the cry, which is that of nature as well as religion, "Let not mine heart forget the things mine eyes have seen". The greatest perversion of the poet's function is to falsify the memory of that transfiguration of the senses, and to make light of its sacramental character.' Just this intensely sensuous recollection, this reverent memory of pleasures enjoyed, is what makes the verse of Coventry Patmore, beside the love poems of other Victorians, so burningly, masculinely forceful and alive. Compared with him, Swinburne is a masturbating schoolboy, Rossetti a weary drug-soaked sensualist, and Tennyson a little hen-pecked* and effete. Behind all his poetry—amorous or religious—behind the range and circling of his thought, his sudden ascents into mystical ether, his swallow-dive swooping back to the body, behind his tactile images, behind the soaring music of his verse, there is always—not heresay—but personal experience: the evidence and energy of physical love.

Nor was Patmore one of those poets in whom a development of the senses precludes intellectual organization. Like Donne, he both felt and thought his subject; nor do I know of any poem which makes a more loftily reasoned plea for the state of matrimony than *The Angel in the House.*

Just how far the poetic is dependent upon the erotic we see further when we come to study the life of Soren Kierkegaard. 'If I had not been strictly brought up in the Christian religion,' he writes, 'and if all my inner suffering from childhood up had not been increased at the very moment when my career may be said to have begun . . . I should have been a poet.' Love, like poetry, is a form of self-communication, and sometimes the expression of both may be obstructed by inhibitions springing from guilt.

*by the silent admonitions of his Muse, Mrs. Grundy, whose counsels as Laureate he could hardly ignore.

'He who cannot reveal himself, cannot love,' writes the philosopher, 'and he who cannot love is the most unhappy man of all.'

Such, we may say, is the starting-point of Mr. Friedmann's analysis, in which he places Kierkegaard in the stream of nineteenth-century 'schizoid thought'. Prevented from union with Regina, on account of his 'sublimated incestuous homosexual relationship with the father', Kierkegaard—Mr. Friedmann argues—sought to transcend both these attachments in his life-long courtship of God. In order to achieve this, the images of his rival attractions had both to be imaginately defeated. In the father's case, Mr. Friedmann tells us, this was effected in *Fear and Trembling* where Kierkegaard himself becomes Abraham, and Isaac the son is seen as the father. In Regina's case, this exorcism was both less concentrated and severe (his book *Repetition* contains the first and gentlest dismissal of her image from his heart); and in a way the partial liberation of his impeded erotic nature, which she early accomplished for him, continued functioning in his work—in his dwelling on the theme of love—until his death.

'To-day,' writes Mr. Friedmann, 'the schizoid* personality, to be creative, must contain the libido of death so that out of his nothingness death can be brought into the world as a conscious existing being'; whilst 80 years or so before that, Patmore was writing the following words, 'The world is finding out . . . that it cannot do without religion. Love is the first thing to wither under its loss'. Those who agree with both these statements will doubly welcome these two most different books.

DEREK STANFORD.

*which he associates with the creative temperament.

The Poet's World: An Anthology of English Poetry. Chosen and compiled by JAMES REEVES (Heinemann, 6s.), *The Ambleside Book of Verse*. Chosen and edited by E. W. PARKER (Longmans, 6s.).

BOTH these books are intended primarily for schools—Mr. Parker's avowedly so, Mr. Reeves' implicitly by reason of the explanatory nature of its Introduction and the elementary simplicity of its notes.

Poets are born, not made; but anthologies are made, not born. Neither do they just 'happen' by flinging together a collection of poems written through the ages, and dividing them into 'Narrative Poems', 'Lyrics', 'Humour', etc., without any apparent criterion of choice, as Mr. Parker has done. A selection such as his that omits Chaucer; all the Elizabethans except Shakespeare and Dekker; that has nothing for the seventeenth century of Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, Milton, Marvell or Dryden; that represents the Augustans only by Pope; and that, among the moderns, omits Eliot, Auden, MacNeice, the Sitwells and Dylan Thomas to find room for Christopher Morley, Captain Marryat and Alfred Noyes, does not deserve, and will not receive, serious consideration. As a representative pageant of English poetry it is a travesty. And a volume calling itself *The Ambleside Book of Verse* really should not repeat the old heresy that to Wordsworth poetry was 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'. If the quotation cannot be given in full then for criticism's—and Wordsworth's—sake let's have none of it.

All the omissions cited in Mr. Parker's collection are remedied by Mr. Reeves except those of a few of our contemporaries, and in the perspective of thirteen hundred years of verse—for he goes back to the Anglo-Saxon in Gavin Bone's translations—this scarcely matters. Perhaps it is a little hard to swallow the publisher's acclamation of it as 'a new standard anthology of English poetry' for it has not quite the range or universality of the *Oxford Book of English Verse*. Q's anthology, whatever its limitations—his cutting of a poem without recording the fact, or his occasional 'blind spots'—was a grand piece of work. *Feliciter audax*—his happy valiancy, his flair for lighting on a man's best work, was as rare as it was estimable. If Mr. Reeves does not quite attain this—his inclusions from Pope and Eliot, for example, are scarcely representative, and those from Donne of only one side of his genius—he avoids the radical unbalance of Palgrave whose *Treasury*, after all, claimed only to be of lyrics, and casts his net wider and per-

haps more discerningly than Gerald Bullett in *The English Galaxy* —to mention only two volumes of similar range.

He has a nice blend of the 'obviously unomittable' and a personal choice that reveals taste and critical discrimination. Like Mr. Parker he is weak on the Augustans: Matt Prior at least surely deserves a place. But in the other centuries the only surprising omissions are, perhaps, Sir Philip Sydney, Crashaw, and the much—and unjustly—neglected Wyatt. And if Anglo-Saxon translations were to be included what of Pound's magnificent *Seafarer*?

Of the Introduction and the Notes—designed as we have stated for school use only—nothing need be said except to commend their limpid clarity and admirably simple prose style. For a poet like Mr. Reeves, whose own work often contains a good deal of complexity, it is an added tribute that he should be able to appreciate the unaffected simplicity of much of the verse, particularly from the earlier centuries, that he includes and that he should write so understandingly and appraisingly of it. Many poet-critics have come down on that fence; Mr. Reeves rides lightly but firmly in the saddle.

HERMANN PESCHMANN.

BLEAK SPIRIT

Winter is an aspect of the spirit.

A Crown for Cain. EMANUEL LITVINOFF (Falcon Press, 7s. 6d.).

MR. Litvinoff, in his pessimism and in his technique which is a lack of technique, reminds me of the American poet, Robinson Jeffers—but a Jeffers without such intensity of symbolism. Here you have the predominantly sexual imagery, the lonely hero (no reference to anyone else human or in human terms), the references to Hamlet, the monotonous blank verse, the occasional rhymes, usually clumsy ('Up springs the murderer, red-headed Cain, dreaming of bitterness, a lurid stain'), the gloomy platitudes, a vocabulary of clichés (plus occasional borrowings from D. Thomas), the lack of emotion except where animal symbols or animalism occur and the constant humourless reiteration through all nominal changes of theme and subject of 'an oppression of blind fate', 'unexpiated sin', 'Man, lonely among the stars, turning, and turning to no revelation', etc. It is true that Mr. Litvinoff prefers buds and

trees and things aqueous to Mr. Jeffers' prevalent eagles, but there are nevertheless the usual stags and horses. It is true, too, that Mr. Litvinoff is consciously Jewish, but I cannot believe that all this is merely a racial matter. It is a matter of 'to-morrow is a denial of yesterday' and

> *O do not talk to me of death, Moon*
> *O do not talk of it. . . .*
> *It is unlucky to see the moon*
> *through glass.*

This seems a bit tough on the moon, since Mr. Litvinoff himself does little else but talk of it—but, as in Mr. Jeffers' case (though Mr. Jeffers has a bit more), there is not sufficient feeling—the poems are simply not moving. Whether it is that the feeling is dissipated in the monotonous technique and the use of words as worn counters, or that there never was any feeling, it is hard to say. But even Mr. Jeffers doesn't succeed in creating more than an *appearance* of having something big to say. Mr. Litvinoff barely does that. He makes you feel only the dreariness of his whining monody, not the tragedy of what it is all about. It is not so much that he lacks art (like Jeffers he is accomplished in his way), but that his art is itself negative. It is one thing to be moved by a profound pessimism and misery; it is quite another —which Mr. Litvinoff doesn't achieve—to make a profound and rewarding poetry of it.

NICHOLAS MOORE.

ROCHESTER

Selected Lyrics and Satires edited by Ronald Duncan. "An admirable selection" *The Listener* 7s. 6d.

CATULLUS

The Complete Poems, translated with Commentary by Jack Lindsay. "The authentic, timeless ring". *Time and Tide* 9s. 6d.

sylvan press

W. J. STRACHAN

Moments of Time, "neat and pointed poetry". *Tribune* 6s. 6d.

GLORIA KOMAI

In Wake of Wind, containing poems which have appeared here and abroad since Never Despair of Gardens. 3s. 6d.

'THE BEAUTY OF THE LANGUAGE'

Rainer Maria Rilke, The Lay of Love and *Death of Cornet Christopher Rilke*, translated by LESLIE PHILLIPS and STEFAN SCHIMANSKI (Lindsay Drummond, 7s. 6d.).

TRANSLATION is a singular craft, which at its worst has this in common with art that it reveals the quality of the mind from which it issues. Snobbery about culture-objects must not be allowed to dazzle us in this field, where snobbery plays so large a part. The threat to literature, and to all the arts and humanities, comes far less from the indifference of the Philistine, the unawareness of the mob, than from the activities of the charlatan. He, the quack against whom the exact sciences put up barricades, has free entry into realms where the only criterion is the gullibility of the public to accept what is offered it on the terms dictated by self-interest, vanity and ignorance. And whatever scandal may sooner or later transpire, the quack, by his very nature, sustains less damage than the thing on which he has brought disrepute by his claim to be associated with it.

Rilke's adolescently romantic poem is hardly worth writing about at this date, not without reason was it left till last, untranslated into English. But now, in two German-English editions, one at a guinea, both 'especially printed and designed to display the beauty of the language', there has appeared a 'version, the publication of which has been authorized by Rilke's literary executor'. That the translation was undertaken by two people obviously not at home in either German or English, and who show no feeling for poetry, is bad. That Rilke's literary executor, Anton Kippenberg, without whose authorization no book of Rilke translation can be published, should have given carte blanche to this shoddy scribble, which is neither a plain [illegible] nor a poetical 'version', is worse, though perhaps not surprising, but Rilke, himself a translator of verse, would certainly have objected. He is the first victim; the second is the English public. All blame ultimately falls on Professor Kippenberg.

Of the twenty-nine pages occupied by the translation, two can pass. Nothing else can. Punctuation, which in this poem has an even more important function than usual in determining tempo and the grouping of thought and image, is altered with a regularity so marked that one must assume it is deliberate, arising from a love of mischief. The order of words and clauses is altered in the same way; sentences are turned back to front although English

usage does not demand it any more than the rhythm does, and the sound merely becomes ugly. Rhythm and sound are only two of the elements in poetry to which these collaborators are quite insensitive. For instance, the murmurous: 'Nur in der Nacht manchmal glaubt man den Weg zu kennen' ('Only at night we sometimes think we know the way') bumps like a cart going over a field track: '*Only at night do we feel at times that we know our way*'. 'Und das ist viel' ('And that is much') becomes '*Which is much*': ungrammatical, unnecessary, sets the teeth on edge. However, if a text as short and simple as this can give a team of translators scope for very many gross mistranslations, misreadings, howlers, solecisms and out-and-out omissions, it is not much use enquiring into other aspects of their fitness for the work. Bad translators generally get off too lightly. It will not do. Rilke is still fashionable and this translation is likely to be fairly widely read, as it has already been reviewed, by well-meaning people who believe it *is* a translation. Further, there are two unusual elements in this case. The translators do not respect their original even within the narrow limits of their own capacity, but either mutilate it or touch it up like a provincial photographer taking the character out of a face. And they do not always write in English, but in a synthetic jargon not without its humours.

The touching-up, the tampering with the text, has a sickening fascination. Messrs. Phillips and Schimanski *don't think Rilke good enough.* Hence, as they have a taste for the drawing-room-ballad poetic diction of a hundred years ago, they do not say 'tired', but '*weary*', 'always the same picture' becomes '*ever the same unchanging scene*' 'girls' become '*maidens*', 'said goodbye' becomes '*bade farewell*', 'give' becomes '*bestow*', and so on. When Rilke did write fake poetry he did it in a more sophisticated way; he had a special skill in wringing the emotion out of old simple phrases. 'Und das ist ein altes trauriges Lied' means 'And this is an old sad song'. It is *not: 'His song is an old and sorrowful song'*, which removes Rilke's pet introductory 'and' (they do this whenever they think of it, but often put an 'and' in where Rilke has none), turns 'this' into '*his*', repeats '*song*' and throws in an alliteration, as though Rilke even at that stage did not know both his own mind and the tricks of the trade.

Further examples of genteelism: a lace collar become a '*collar of lace*', a white horse a '*charger of white*' (whatever that may be), 'what women are' becomes '*the meaning of women*', men 'all in iron' are suddenly '*accoutred in iron*', 'your rough coat' enigmatically becomes '*the cloth of a soldier*' and 'are you home-sick?'

'are you yearning for home?' Two-syllabled alliterative words *'shining and slender'* are given for 'hell und schlank', although the translation is in fact 'bright and slim'. What reason can there be for not availing oneself of it?

'Dennoch leuchten eine Weile die Augen des kleinen Franzosen mit eigenem Licht' is changed into: *'Only the eyes of the slight Marquis gleam for a while with their own inner light'*. This is on a par with: 'Waiter, there is a fly in the butter', to which the waiter answered: 'It is not a fly, sir, but a moth, and it is not butter, but margarine—otherwise your statement is substantially correct'. It is not a slight Marquis, but a young Frenchman (he is a marquis, but is not at this point referred to as such), and it is neither *only* his eyes, nor only *his* eyes, that gleam, nor do they gleam at all. There is also nothing about an 'inner' light, whatever that might be as manifest in eyes. The marquis turns up again on page 41, where what means literally: 'Long he gazes after the Frenchman' is rendered *'Long he looks at the disappearing Marquis'*. The case of the disappearing Marquis! But what can be expected of a person who *'fondled a tiny rose'*, although Rilke says he 'kissed a little rose'? Later one petal of this rose becomes a whole flower, perhaps inevitably, as it is *'tossed up and down on the waves of his heart'*. This happens under the strain, perhaps, of seeing *'wenches come winking with purple hats in their flowering hair'*. Any decent crib would tell one that they are *waving* (and not in this sentence at all) and their hats are *scarlet* (Biblical purple) and could not make the mistake of thinking that in English one can wear a hat *in* one's hair.

Then comes a while later: *'The resting flag has restive shadows.'* What Rilke wrote means: 'the motionless flag has restless shadows'. One way and another they have a lot of trouble with this flag. On page 76: *'seeing the fair youth without helmet, they know the flag as their own'*. Like most of the rest of this text, the line has the disadvantage of sounding like an old-fashioned crib, without having the helpfulness of a crib. Would 'they' not have known the flag as their own, one wonders, if the fair youth had had his helmet on? A crib would never have raised such alarming questions, for it would have had to say: 'and recognize the bright, bare-headed man and recognize the flag'. Need the difference be laboured?

The worst comes when the poor Cornet has rushed blindly into the midst of the heathen dogs and imagines himself in gardens. Rilke says: 'als es jetzt hinter ihm zusammenschlägt', meaning the metaphorical waters, the foe, rushing together again

behind him. Having made the howler: '*As they strike together behind him*', the translators lose their heads entirely and 'strike' like a cuckoo-clock. The scimitars (Rilke oddly calls them 'round sabres' and these translators, for the sake of getting it all over, simply 'sabres') instead of 'leaping towards him' are made to '*strike down upon him*'. Then, faced with the poetic pun in 'Strahl um Strahl', which means both light and water, beam on beam, jet on jet, they have a last go: '*stroke after stroke*' (*after* just to upset the rhythm). The fête or festival is turned into a '*feast*', as though Handel's Water-Music were suddenly to be called Open-Air-Café-Music.

There is hardly space for the especial jargon, of which the following examples are for the connoisseur: '*at first had spoken and laughed for three whole days*', '*And Von Langenau has seen that rose*', '*He seems like a child that wishes to sleep*', '*For that he does not use them. They are good just for swearing*', '*Slowly he paints with large and solemn, upright characters*'.

Rilke, whose '*original differentiation between death*' Mr. Schimanski mentions in an introduction notable chiefly for the language in which it is written (and the gross mis-spelling of Rilke's fiancée's name), is quoted as having once dismissed the Cornet as a '*highly second-rate work*'. However, '*In its manner it has preserved the élan of its origin and this presumably gave it power over the kindred emotion of a happy age*'. To this one can only wink with a purple hat, one's eyes gleaming for a while with their own inner light.

EITHNE WILKINS.

Twenty-Five Poems by DEREK A. WALCOTT (Advocate Co., Barbadoes), *Poems of Hope and Despair* by FRANK A. WILSON (General Printing and Stationery Coy., Mauritius).

MR. Walcott lives on an island and I should say that he has had some opportunity of reading the work of that other island poet, Lawrence Durrell. He has also read the poets of the 'thirties ('gun's Grammar in lap') and Dylan Thomas, e.g.:

> *Young as the water I was once, and time tame as wax*
> *Melted to my braggart sun . . .*

Yet in spite of the occasional Audenese and argument which upset the rhythm, there's no doubt that this poet has got something of his own:

Stretch him out on the world's rack no longer;
Time has her false trumpets, and fake is the word
The hibiscus blows . . . .

These lines come from his Elegies on Thomas Chatterton, Sidney Keyes and others, but there are lines and phrases beside these which show that he has that necessary love of words which Eliot rightly says is the mark of a poet.

If I find Mr. Wilson's poetry rather less exciting, it is partly because he has a matured conventional style which is sometimes rather flat. He is also a little too preoccupied with love, which as Dr. Johnson said, is only one of many passions. I can welcome the Shakespearian touch of

When I reflect upon the certain death of love

or

Deceived by love, but ever claiming more.

I also like his effective story of the temptation of a preacher by 'black, bulbous breasts', but when he plunges into the Metaphysical bad taste of

Last night I crawled within the testicles of God

I can only blame Dr. Leavis and the seventeenth century.

Yet both these Colonial poets have a freshness of touch which is sadly lacking in the present Age of Imitation. The one can describe like a painter the fishermen rowing homeward in the dusk, while the other sums up his island with the lines:

I hear the trade winds rattling the old dead branches,
And pull the leaves, and comb the tall ripe canes.

No wonder, as Durrell says, such islands whisper to the ambitious.

JOHN BAYLISS

STUDIES IN REGIONALISM: CONTEMPORARY ULSTER POETRY

DURING recent years there has been increasing confusion as to what Regionalism actually is. Despite all that has been written on the subject, there is still a number of critics who seem to be under the fallacious impression that it is solely a redirection to an obsolete past, a form of parochialism chiefly concerned with local dialects and the vindication of anachronistic customs and ideas. Among those people possessing a virile satellite culture there is a tendency to identify it exclusively with nationalism; even so well-informed a writer as Robert Greacen (an Ulsterman) has referred to regionalism as a 'component' of nationalism. There have also been attempts to discover a common factor in all the satellite cultures of these islands (to the extent of enrolling Cornishmen, West Countrymen and East Anglians) under the mystical banner of Celticism—'that indefinable quality that makes the work of the true Celtic writer stand out on its own in any collection'—which, however interesting as experiments, were quite incompatible with the fundamental attributes of regional culture. It is imperative, therefore, that I should define the word in the sense that I intend to use it.

First it should be emphasized that, despite the aspirations of Dialect Societies and Village Institutes (and I offer no disparagement of worthy organizations), true regionalism is a movement towards a future in which a balanced life in every community has become the source of local self-respect and human dignity. It arises out of a natural affection for or an attachment, conscious or unconscious, to a particular environment, and finds expression through the language, outlook and manner of life, of the people concerned, adapted to the intellectual and emotional experience of the individual. It follows that to achieve this equilibrium the complexities of existing conditions must be taken fully into account. The poet who neglects or is unable to do so will probably find himself isolated in a mental backwater, at best a local-colourist, at worst a sentimentalist looking to a past that has never existed. As Cleanth Brooks has pointed out, there cannot be any real apprehension of the past without an immediate knowledge of the present.

In Scotland and Wales, where the regional and national boundaries coincide, there has perhaps been some justification for exporting cultural products under nationalistic labels. The Scots

and the Welsh have found it necessary to protect their cultures from absorption. Hugh MacDiarmid complains that '. . . under our compulsory education system our children are doped with English poetry and given little or no access to their natural heritage of Scottish poetry at all, and this is, of course, not reciprocal'. Now, however commendable from a racial aspect such an attitude is, it may have a detrimental effect upon poetry and literature in general. There is considerable danger that the economic and political elements will be over-emphasized at the expense of the cultural, with the result that critical standards are lowered and a superficially nationalistic content becomes the primary criterion of value. And if, as it frequently is, the attitude is confined to a vociferous minority, whose opinions are unacceptable to their fellows, there will also be an inclination towards the development of an aggressive self-consciousness.

In such cases the regional and national characteristics may run parallel to each other, but they are nevertheless quite distinct, and the operative regional influences can be discerned within the general framework. The principal difference between the two is that while regionalism offers its contribution to the whole culture of a nation or comity of nations, nationalism is more conducive to cultural isolation. The history of Irish literature and drama provides a clear example of the inter-relationship and counteraction of these predominant forces. It will be observed, however, that since the Irish regained their independence, the nationalistic movement has declined in importance so far as literature is concerned without a corresponding vitalization of regional culture. (At this point, and before anyone is tempted to deposit a time-bomb under my bed, I should like to make it clear that such considerations as the merits or demerits of partition are outside my present field of study.)

Ulster is in a unique position. No other province in Ireland is so well defined, geographically, politically, or in its ancestry. In all the rich Irish mythology, for human interest, vitality and poetry, there is little to compare with the Ultonian cycle of legends centred upon Conachar mac Nessa, King of Ulster, Cuchulain, and the Red Branch Order of heroes, whose court was held at Emain Macha (Armagh). One might well remark that it was no mere *accident of birth* that made Cuchulain, the Irish Achilles, an Ulsterman (though, according to legend, the province then extended to the Boyne). There must have been the resemblance of a partition, too, for Ulster was almost always fighting the combined forces of Connacht, Leinster and Munster.

Deirdre's flight to Scotland with the sons of Usna seems to imply that from the earliest times there was a closer connection with Scotland than with the other Irish provinces. Whether that is true or not, the colonization of Ulster by Scottish protestants early in the seventeenth century was a contributing factor to the distinction, in idiom, temperament, sense of humour and religious propensity, which now exists between the Northerner and his fellow-Irishmen. A distinction brought into greater prominence by Eire's neutrality during the second World War.

One of the most interesting features about Ulster regionalism in recent years is that it has produced a number of individual poets like Louis MacNeice, W. R. Rodgers, Roy McFadden, Robert Greacen and John Hewitt, without fostering a special movement. If there are patent advantages in this, there are also disadvantages, as MacNeice has pointed out in his poem *Convoy*:

> *. . . . the individual sets*
> *A course for all his soul's more basic needs*
> *Of love and pride-of-life, but sometimes he forgets*
> *How much their voyage home depends upon pragmatic*
> *And ruthless attitudes—destroyers and corvettes.*

and it is partly because there is no specific 'school', as there is, say, in the case of the young Scottish poets, dominated by the ideas and Anglophobia of Hugh MacDiarmid, because there are no 'pragmatic and ruthless attitudes', that their work has not been given the attention it deserves. Another distinction is that there is little or no emphasis upon Gaelic as the appropriate poetic language; nor is there any equivalent to Lallans or 'synthetic' Scots. Extant in the vocabulary of one or two Ulster poets (John Hewitt, for instance) one may encounter words which have passed out of current usage in England and Scotland, but such words are so infrequent as to make a glossary of terms unnecessary.

The peculiar relationship which existed between Ulster and Eire prior to 1939 became further strained on the outbreak of war, and the disquietude is reflected in the work of most of the Northern Irish poets. In *Neutrality* Louis MacNeice relates 'The neutral island facing the Atlantic' to 'The neutral island in the heart of man', and with more than usual directness, concludes:

> *But then look eastward from your heart, there bulks*
> *A continent, close, dark, as archetypal sin,*
> *While to the west off your own shores the mackerel*
> *Are fat—on the flesh of your kin.*

The poetry of Louis MacNeice is outstanding for its technical accomplishment and satirical power. Certainly no study of Ulster poetry would be complete without reference to his work, but as it has already been examined comprehensively by other critics, it is not requisite for me to draw further attention to it here except to remark its influence upon the younger poets, Robert Greacen and Maurice James Craig especially.

Roy McFadden shows more serious concern with the problems of Ireland and for the individual who is embroiled in them. He is never content with over-simplifications or poetic attitudes, but gropes below the surface of his subject matter, and though he is not always successful in laying bare the roots, there is no mistaking his integrity of purpose. On visiting Dublin during the war, he writes:

Old city, with a young girl's face,
Your mask is foreign to this naked time,
Your easy laughter mocks the living dead.
Take heed of history, for I have seen
Such as you broken and swept away
As the sea smooths the black feet from the sand.

but this is not the invidious reaction of a partisan so much as the sensitive observation of an idealist in search of a valid synthesis; indeed, in this poem, as also in *For Retired Rebels, In Ireland Now* and *Letter to an Irish Novelist*' he identifies himself with his theme to such an extent as to accept a personal responsibility. McFadden makes more use of Ulster mythology than his contemporaries. It is invariably well assimilated and apposite to his sense of history, so that his poems often communicate at different levels of understanding. Cuchulain (who unknowingly killed his own son) appears in several poems as the archetype both for the poet himself and for Ireland—'The blood of Conlaech is on all our hands'. It is this almost prophetic awareness that compels his own isolation as a poet:

This, then, I have learned
From the quiet mouth of the wound:
That he who stands alone
High in echoing time,
Cold and hard as a stone
Sunk in a sunless sea,
Conquers the ache of time.

Like Roy McFadden, Robert Greacen is keenly aware of his isolation in 'this alien world', but his 'aloneness' is of quite an-

other character. In his endeavour to reconcile spirit with matter, concept with external form, McFadden has in some degree achieved that sensitive adjustment of the ego to the conditions imposed by his own time and experience. From the mental pinnacle to which he has climbed, he surveys the landscape with a realistic yet unjaundiced eye, and attempts the analysis of symptoms and effects. Robert Greacen, on the other hand, has of necessity been driven back upon himself for assurance and to create the unity he has been unable to discover in the social strata. He is a man standing on the brink of a precipice looking for 'that secret word of youth / where nothing dies and every bird's a phoenix', and finding it only in his imagination. What he sees outside himself he can seldom accept and his manner of refusal is often so abrupt as to endanger his balance. This antipathy is implicit in most of his early sociological poems and, despite his insistence upon human values, it places an obstacle to any really penetrating diagnosis. In the need to convince himself, he announces:

> *But everywhere, we see the uncharted darkness melt,*
> *We see the sun pour on the sap-drained faces,*
> *The oil of joy press motion in the wheels of love,*
> *The masks fall off, the undying day return.*

but the evidence he supplies is not adequate enough for us to share his optimism.

That is one aspect of his work. If I have given it prominence it is because I believe that, when the corrective is applied, it will ultimately prove to be rich ground for development. Greacen is conscious of the anomaly in his poetry (note how, in his book, *The Undying Day*, he carefully divides his poems into two sections: 'Microcosm' and 'Macrocosm') and there are recent signs that he is adopting a more self-analytical approach. Turning from the contemplation of society to personal themes, from man in general to man in particular, he displays a remarkable insight into the impalpabilities of human nature. He is, in my opinion, one of the most imaginative of the younger Irish writers and in poems like *The Bird, With Green Eyes, Poem in September* and *Lines for Friends* are to be discerned the integration and clarity of vision requisite to the major work he has yet to produce.

A striking contrast, in language, tone, treatment and philosophy, is presented by the poems of W. R. Rodgers and John Hewitt. In many respects the one is a complete antithesis to the other, even to the choice of book-titles (*Awake* by Rodgers;

No Rebel Word by Hewitt). The former, under the direct influence of Hopkins, writes exuberantly and his 'arriving winds of words / Pour like Atlantic gales over these ears', as he ranges about a wide variety of subjects in his inordinate style. His faults are those of the prodigal—carelessness and indulgence. Hewitt is meditative and restrained, normally confining himself to the pastoral tradition of Clare, Edward Thomas and Robert Frost, and a little out of his depth when he extends his scope beyond that; his prevailing mood one of 'sober joy'. Eric Gill's conception of the ideal society as that in which every man is a special kind of artist and, in fellowship with his neighbours, fulfils his potentialities through an organic way of living, meets with Hewitt's whole-hearted approval:

> *I walked clean out of Europe into peace:*
> *for every man I met was relevant,*
> *gathering fruit or shouting to his horse,*
> *sawing his timber, measuring his well.*

The wit of the group is Maurice James Craig. Although his epigrams and wisecracks, at their best, provide a pleasing relief to the earnestness of much modern poetry, his weapons are not pointed enough and his targets too indefinite and impersonal for his satire to be effective in the manner of Swift or Wilde. He is undoubtedly a versatile craftsman, possessing a firm sense of design and control, yet his poetry, as a whole, leads one to suspect that he is easily satisfied by the limited achievement of a surface brilliance and fluency of language—there is, one feels, no urgency or inevitability behind it. Perhaps he ought not to be included here. For some years he has been resident in Dublin and if his early life in Northern Ireland made any marked impression upon his outlook, he has succeeded in preventing that impact from affecting his work, which may account for his apparent preoccupation with trivialities.

While lacking Craig's technical facility, Sam Harrison is an unpretentious writer with depths that have not, so far, been properly sounded. Finally, there is Bruce Williamson, another Ulster exile in Dublin, whose early work attested to his original cast of mind (I have been unable to examine any of his recent work). Considered together, these and other young Ulster poets, all developing along individual lines, would appear to have distinct possibilities. It remains to be seen what use they will make of their opportunities and talents.

HOWARD SERGEANT.

DE LA MUSIQUE AVANT TOUTE CHOSE . . .

Paul Verlaine: Selected Poems. Translated by C. F. MACINTYRE. (University of California Press and Cambridge University Press. 21s.).

Paul Verlaine: Forty Poems. With translations by ROLAND GANT and CLAUDE APCHER (Falcon Press. 8s. 6d.).

'How many times,' wrote Paul Valéry, 'I have watched him pass my door, angry, cursing, striking the earth with the heavy stick of a sick man or a threatening tramp! How could one imagine that this vagrant—so brutal in appearance and speech, sordid and yet perturbing and pathetic—could be the writer of the most delicate music in our poetry, of the newest and most disturbing word melodies in our language?' So much has been said of Verlaine's music—yet, at each return to it, one is caught up again in the first flush of surprise and wonder. It is so faultless in itself, that one feels almost a reluctance to try and penetrate its essence: for once one turns to the poet himself, there is all the sad and shabby array of accessory facts, the frustrated impulse, the imperfect penitence, the drunken decline, that make up the sordid and perturbing vagrant that Valéry saw. How many times he must have echoed the sentiment of Baudelaire's remark in a letter to his mother: 'J'ai une âme si singulière que je ne m'y reconnais pas moi-même'. Yet he had none of Baudelaire's self-conscious demonism —when he flew to violence, it was the unpremeditated violence of the child. He persisted, in the world of adult passions, in preserving the child's literal and unquestioning vision, and invoked the inevitable: slow laceration and final destruction by those passions. For all his pathetic pose of 'Pauvre Lélian', he remains the most vulnerable of poets.

The simplest music is usually the hardest to carry faithfully into another language (see how Pushkin and Tyutchev and Heine confound their translators). It is one of the endearing features of Mr. C. F. MacIntyre's volume, that he avows *Chanson d'Automne* to be untranslatable. For his translations of Verlaine have clearly been a labour of love: and where the achievement is so high, a well-placed modesty only reinforces his authority. In a brief but excellent introduction, and in a series of notes which for once enormously aid the reader's enjoyment, he shows the nicest balance between enthusiasm and discrimination, and wears an enviable erudition lightly. In the poems themselves, he has

chosen to emulate the rhyme schemes and metres of the originals, while remaining as close as possible to the literal meaning, and this he carries off with smooth virtuosity and an audacity nearly always rewarded by success. He shows extraordinary dexterity in manipulating a vocabulary as rich as Verlaine's own, into supple forms which give back an almost faultless reflection. In this brief space, one or two illustrations must suffice to show his skill.

O triste, triste était mon âme
A cause, à cause d'une femme.

Oh, sad, sad was my soul because
because—for a woman's sake it was.

Or notice the entirely justified freedom he takes with—

Je me souviens, je me souviens
Des heures et des entretiens,
Et c'est le meilleur de mes biens.

I remember, I recall
hours intimate and trivial,
and this to me is best of all.

Of those most adorable and difficult of all Verlaine's poems to translate, the *Fêtes Galantes,* Mr. MacIntyre makes a *tour de force,* and one would like to quote his versions of *Clair de Lune, Cortège,* or *Les Coquillages* in full. Here again, there is room for no more than a few lines—I have chosen them from the end of *l'Allée*:

—Blonde en somme. Le nez mignon avec la bouche
Incarnadine, grasse, et divine d'orgueil
Inconscient.—D'ailleurs plus fine que la mouche
Qui ravive l'éclat un peu niais de l'oeil.

—In short, a blonde. The darling nose, full mouth,
carnation, goddess-like with pride. Likewise,
more subtle even than the artful mouche
which points the brilliant, somewhat foolish, eyes.

In their much more restricted volume of forty poems, the choice made by Mr. Roland Gant and Mr. Claude Apcher is on the whole excellent, and they have included verses from Verlaine's last books, *Parallèlement, Amour, Bonheur,* and *Liturgies Intimes* which Mr. MacIntyre omits. Unfortunately, while keep-

ing fairly close to the original metres, they have not attempted to find corresponding rhymes: and despite Verlaine's own pronouncement in *Art Poétique* ('O qui dira les torts de la Rime!'), it is his imaginative use of rhyme, including verb forms and adverbs —the resonant 'formidablement' at the end of *Marine* for example —that supplies half his intimate and subtle music.

ERIK DE MAUNY.

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20th July, 1949.

The Editor,
Poetry Quarterly,
7 Crown Passage,
Pall Mall, S.W.1
Sir,

Mr. Alexander Henderson asks in your Summer issue: is it not time that something was done to get W. B. Yeats's chief works back into print.

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2. The *Collected Plays* in one volume. This edition contains some material in addition to that which appeared in the *Collected Plays* published before the war. This book will be ready early in 1950.
3. The *Collected Poems* in one volume. This edition also contains material which did not appear in the *Collected Poems* published before the war. This book will be ready for publication early in 1950.
4. *Selected Poems of W. B. Yeats* in the Golden Treasury series. This will also be ready for publication early in 1950.

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